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American School
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GREEK INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE NEGEB

Of the following inscriptions all but three were discovered in a necropolis north of Ruḥêbeh on the second and third of June, 1905. The Antipater inscription and the two shorter ones were found a week later at Beersheba. Ruḥêbeh is, no doubt, identical with the Rehoboth of Gen. xxvi, 22, where Isaac is said to have dug a well. Possibly the town figures under the name of Rubuta in the Amarna correspondence (182, 183, and 239). It was known to Josephus as Ρωβαθ (Ant. I, 18, 2). In the Graeco-Roman period its name seems to have been Robatha. According to the *Notitia dignitatum*, 72, 11 and 73, 27, there was a garrison of *equites sagittarii indigenae* at Robatha; and Ροβαθα likewise occurs in the *Rescript of Beersheba* (No. 8). The loss of the guttural, suggested as a difficulty by Clermont Ganneau (*Revue Biblique*, 1896, p. 426), is no more serious than in Ρωβαθ (Josephus, *l.c.* and Eusebius, *Onom.* 142, 14). In either case it was undoubtedly due to the tendency to weaken and slur over this guttural in pronunciation. Why the place should be looked for east of the Arabah is not apparent, when Thamara, Praesidion, Eiseiba, and Moa, are certainly in the Negeb.

The first of the inscriptions was found by Mr. John Whiting, of Jerusalem, who accompanied our party. Squeezes and copies were made by myself and my students in the American School for Oriental Study and Research in Palestine during the year 1904-1905, Dr. A. T. Olmstead, Mr. B. B. Charles, and Mr. J. E. Wrench, and the squeezes are now at Cornell University. The small limestone steles on which they were cut ranged in height from six inches to two feet. All were left *in situ* except two that were handed over to the kaim-makam of Beersheba, and the discovery was reported to him and to the mutasarrif of Jerusalem. In addition to those given

below, a number of others were copied which are not published here, as they had already been seen by members of the Dominican School in Jerusalem and published in the *Comptes Rendus* of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1904, pp. 298–305, and in *Revue Biblique*, 1905, pp. 245–275. The texts have been transcribed from the impressions and translated by Mr. Charles; the bracketed notes on the chronology and other matters are mine.

1. A rectangular stele. Letters $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. high. Lines separated by ruling.

✠ Ἀνεπιά ἡ Μαρία Ἡννης ἐν μηνὶ Δίου κδ' ινδ. α' ἔτους νοζ' ✠

"Mary, daughter of Anna, died on the 24th of the month Dios of the year 477, in the first indiction."

"Ἡννης, a late form of Ἄννα. Cf. Ἐννη in Dussaud et Macler, *Voyage archéologique au Šafâ et dans le Djebel ed-Druz*, No. 83.

[The era used at Robatha-Ruhêbeh in the period when these epitaphs were written was that of the province of Arabia, beginning on the 22d of March, 106 A.D. Indiction I began Sept. 1, 582 A.D. The 24th of Dios, 477, was the 15th of November 582 A.D.]

2. Stele with circular top and rectangular base. Part of base with inscription broken off. Letters from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 in. high. Inscription around circumference of top:

✠ Μενὶ Ξανθικοῦ ἐκ τοῦ ἔτους ννα'

"In the month of Xanthikos of the year 451."

Inscription on base:

✠ Ἀνεπ(α'η) ἐ Μα[ρία] Μαρίας

"Mary, daughter of Mary, died."

[Xanthikos 451 = 22 March to 20 April, 556 A.D.]

3. Rectangular base of a decapitated stele. Letters 1 to 2 in. high.

✠ Ἀνεπιά Χάρετος Ζωναίνου μηνὶ Δεσίου ι' ἰνδικτιῶνος γ'

"Charitos, son of Zonainos, died on the 10th of the month Daisios, in the third indiction."

With Χαρετός cf. Χαρήτου in Dussaud et Macler, *l.c.* No. 96. Ζωναῖνος appears in the form Ζωνινου on one of the steles published in *Comptes Rendus*, *l.c.*

[The 10th Daisios would be the 30th May. The use of the indiction only without the year of the era occurs not seldom on these funereal steles.]

4. Letters well cut, from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. high.

✠ Ἀναπάε ὦ μακάριος Στέφ(ανος) Φελουμήνη ✠
μη(νὶ) καλανδὼν κθ' ἔτους υρε'.

"Blessed Stephen, son of Philoumene, died on the 29th of Kalends in the year 495."

Φελουμήνη must be for Φιλουμένης, unless, indeed, it be a still greater slip and meant for Φιλουμενοῦ. If intended for Φιλουμένης, we must explain it either as the inadvertent omission of ς, or as a modern Greek form of genitive without ς, coming into use at this early period.

[This is the only inscription known to me where the term Kalends is used as the name for the first month of the year. According to the *Hemerologium* taken from a copy of the Florence manuscript of Theon's commentary on Ptolemy and published apparently from the papers of Sainte-Croix in *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, XLVII, 1809, pp. 66 ff., the Arabic year began, after the five epagomenae, with the month Xanthikos. It is not impossible that a new year's festival was celebrated in Palestina III at this time like the ἑορτὴ τῶν Καλανδῶν, against whose orgiastic character Asterius preached in Pontus and which Libanius described (cf. Ideler, *Handbuch d. mathematischen und technischen Chronologie*, 1826, II, 334), especially as it came at the vernal equinox. The 29th Kalends of the year 495 is, no doubt, the 19th of April, 600 A.D.]

5. Letters from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. high. Inscription around circumference of top :

✠ Ἀνεπάε ὁ μακάριος Βίκτωρ

On the lower part of top and on base :

✠ ἐμενὶ Λόου ς κβ' ς ἰνδ ς γ' τοῦ ἔτους υνς'

"Blessed Victor died on the 22d of the month Loos, third indiction, year 450."

[The 22d Loos, indiction III, 450 = 10th August, 555. The sign ς has by mistake come before ' rather than after it in the numerals indicating the year.]

6. A stele with circular top and rectangular base. No inscription on top. Letters on base clearly cut but not of uniform size. Height $\frac{5}{8}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ in.

✠ Ἀναπάε ἡ μακαρ(ία) Ἀζονε (ἐ)ν μηνὶ
Ἀρτεμεσίου κέ ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) σ' ἔτους υπγ'

"Blessed Azone died on the 25th of the month Artemisios, sixth indiction, year 483."

Ἀζωνη for Ἀζωνή.

[25 Artemisios, indiction VI, 483 = 15 May, 588.]

7. Letters from 1 to $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. high.

✠ ἐκυμ(ήθη) ἡ μακ(αρία) Μαρία μηνὶ
Ἀρτεμυσίου α' ἰνδικτιῶνος ι'.

"Blessed Mary died on the first of the month Artemisios, in the tenth indiction."

ἐκυμ for ἐκοιμ.

[1 Artemisios = 21 April.]

8. Letters from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. high. Deeply cut.

✠ Ἀζονε νῆα ἤθανα.

Perhaps the engraver meant to write Ἀζωνή νεά ἔθανε, "Young Azone has died."

9. Stele with circular top and rectangular base. Letters from $1\frac{1}{8}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. high.

Inscription around the top:

Ἀβραμίου Ν α

On lower part of top and on base:

ἀνεπά(η) Ἀβ(ράμους) το(ῦ) μηνὸς Ἀρτημι(σίου)

"(The tomb) of Abraham, son of N. Abraham died in the month of Artemisios."

[Artemisios = 21 April to 20 May.]

10. Letters from $\frac{7}{8}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. high. Circular top badly weathered in places. Inscription around top:

Ἀνεπά(ε) . . . μ . . . ν.

On the base:

✠ ἰνδικτιῶνος γ' ἔτ(ους) νμ θ'

" . . . died in the third indiction, year 449."

[Indiction III began 1 September, 554 A.D.; the year 449, 22 March, 554.]

11. The circular top of a stele. Letters from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{4}$ in. high.

Θεμος Ἀβδερης Ζε.

"Thaimos, son of Abderes."

Θεμος for Θαῖμος. Ἀβδερης evidently a Semitic name.

12. Letters from $1\frac{1}{4}$ to 2 in. high.

✠ Ἀναπ(άε) Σεργίου.

"The child of Sergios has died."

13. Letters from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 in. high.

✠ Ἰωάννου Ἀλαφίρ.

"Alaphir, son of John."

For Ἀλαφίρ, cf. Dusseau et Macler, *l. c.*, Nos. 25 b and 121 b. אלהפיר.

14. A fragment. Letters from $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{4}$ in.

The upper line seems to contain the letters *κουε* and the second line *εὐλα*. Perhaps the original reading was *μηνι Ξανθικου ἐ' ἔτ(ους) ὑλα'*.

"On the fifth of the month Xanthikos, year 431."

[That would be the 26th of March, 536 A.D.]

15. A badly weathered base, 6×11 in. Letters $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. high.

✠ Ἀνεπάε . . . μην(νι) Περιτίου ἔτους νοα' ✠

" . . . died in the month of Peritios of the year 471."

[Peritios, 471 = 16 January to 14 February, 577 A.D.]

16. A square stele, $12 \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ in. Letters from $\frac{7}{8}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. high.

Ἀνεπάη ἐ μακαρία Ἀναστασία

"Blessed Anastasia died."

17. The upper part of the circular top of a stele. Letters from $\frac{7}{8}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. high.

Ἀναπάη μακ(αρία) Μαρία μηνι Ἀ

"Blessed Mary died in the month of A

[Artemisios, Appelaeos, or Andynaeos.]

18. Stele with small, circular top. Inscriptions on base. Letters $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{3}{8}$ in. high.

✠ Ἀνεπάε μακαρία Μαρία ✠

"Blessed Mary died."

19. A small stele; letters from $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in., well cut.

✠ Σαουδ

A Semitic name found occasionally at the present day among Syrians. For names from the same root, cf. Johns, *Assyrian Deeds and Documents*, No. 175, pp. 402 f., and Lidzbarski, *Nordsemitische Epigraphik*, I, p. 380.

20. Fragment of a circle containing the letters *Moa* and κτωρ. The latter is doubtless Βίκτωρ.

[Was Victor a native of Moa (*Mwa*), *Madeba Map*, 88, *Rescript of Beersheba*, 13?]

21. Another fragment containing the letters :

Aova

At Beersheba three inscriptions were found :

1. A fragment containing the letters

ΒΙ [Probably βικτωρ, Victor.]

2. A piece of limestone, six in. square. Badly weathered. Letters from $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 in. high. What is visible is :

Β Ο Η Θ Ε

Ν Ο V K V Ρ Ι Ε

Ε Ι Ο V K Α Ι Ν Η

V Π Ε

This may be restored conjecturally as follows :

Βοηθε [Στεφα]νον Κυριε μ(ηνι) (Δε)σιον
κα ιν(δ)η ετους υπε.

"Lord, help Stephen! The 21st of the month Daisios, indiction VIII, year 485."

[There is no doubt that the era of the Provincia Arabia is used. Indiction VIII began Sept. 1, 589 A.D. The 21st Daisios, 485, fell on the 10th of July, 590 A.D. E. Schwartz, "Die Aeren von Gerasa und Eleutheropolis," in *Nachrichten d. k. Ges. d. Wiss. zu Göttingen*, 1906, p. 390, calls attention to the fact

that, in the hitherto published inscriptions from Beersheba, the era of Eleutheropolis, beginning Jan. 1, 200 A.D., is more frequently used than the provincial era.]

3. The third inscription (Fig. 1) was found at the home of a zaptie named Mustafa, where squeezes and photographs were

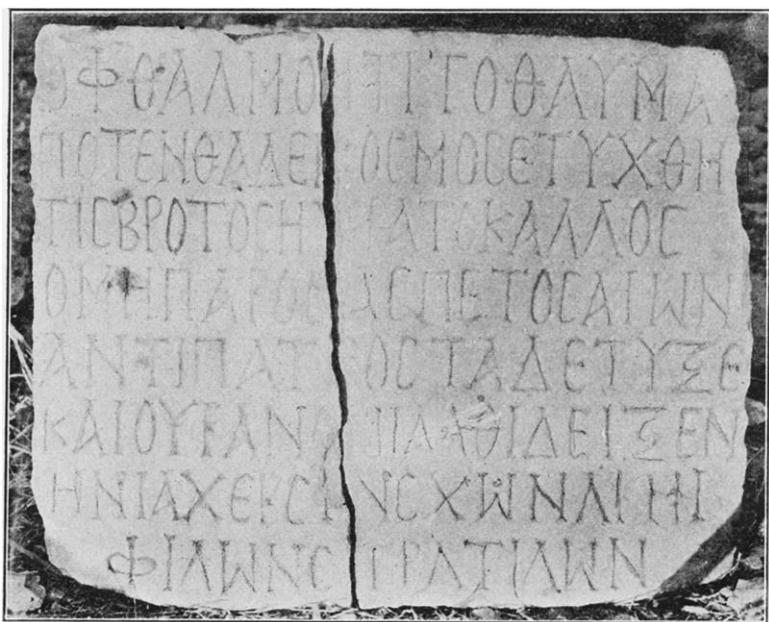


FIGURE 1. — INSCRIPTION FROM BEERSHEBA.

taken. It is engraved on a slab of marble now broken into two pieces. The original dimensions were 15 × 21 in.

Ὅφθαλμοὶ, τί τὸ θαῦμα; πότ' ἐνθάδε κόσμος ἐτύχθη;

Τίς βροτὸς ἤνρα τὸ κάλλος ὃ μὴ πάρος ἄσπετος αἰών;

Ἀντίπατρος τὰδ' ἔτυξε καὶ Οὐρανὸν ἴλαθι δεῖξεν,

Ἦνῖα χέρσιν ἔχων ἀρηιφίλων στρατιῶων.

This inscription consists of four lines of hexameter verse. The most troublesome point is the word ἴλαθι. In form this can only be an imperative, and if translated as such must be parenthetical, a prayer to Antipater as a deified hero.

“O eyes, what marvel! When was order established here?”

What mortal found the thing of beauty which, before, an infinite extent of time had not discovered?

Antipater accomplished this, and (be gracious, O deified hero!)
pointed the way to heaven,
Holding in his hands for Ares the reins of his soldiers."

Or did the writer, doubtless a Semite, understand *ἱλαθι* as an adjective meaning "gracious," so that we should translate "Antipater accomplished this and made heaven gracious"?

Dr. G. W. Elderkin points out as a most remarkable fact that *ὀφθαλμοὶ, τί τὸ θαῦμα; πόθεν* is found in Nonnus, I, 93 and *τί τὸ θαῦμα; πόθεν* in Nonnus, XLVIII, 602; and that these are the only passages in the whole range of epic literature where such an expression occurs. These correspond very closely with the *ὀφθαλμοὶ, τί τὸ θαῦμα; πότ'* of our inscription. As there can be no question of one influencing the other, we may have here a common borrowing from an unknown original of the Hellenistic age. Dr. A. T. Olmstead has suggested that the inscription was set up in honor of Antipater, father of Herod the Great. The character of the writing would lead one to expect a later period, yet all the forms would doubtless allow a date as early as the first century B.C. An Antipater in Idumaea, not far from Gaza, where Herod was born, and the only Antipater in that region, so far as we know, to whom such a eulogy could apply, is likely to be none other than Herod's father.

[The Antipater inscription is not an epitaph, but a poem engraved on a block of marble. It is the only inscription of its kind found in Syria. This gives it a unique interest. It was probably intended to celebrate the dedication of some notable monument in Beersheba. I would translate the four hexameters as follows:

"Eyes, what marvel is this! Such an ornament, how was it made here?

What mortal devised this beautiful thing the world never saw before?

Antipater made it, and shewed how Uranus (gracious be he!)

Holds in his hands the reins of the armies dear to Mars."

The poet expresses his amazement that such an ornament (*κόσμος*), such a thing of beauty (*κάλλος*), as the wide world (*ἄσπετος αἰών*) had never before seen, could have been made in Beersheba. The forms *ἐτύχθη* and *ἔτυξε* (for *ἔτευξε*) from *τεύχω* would make it possible to think of a work of either wood

or metal; but the last lines render it probable that it was an object of art cast in metal, possibly bronze. One naturally thinks of the famous masterpieces in Gaza described by Choriakios (ed. Boissonade, pp. 149 ff.; cf. Stark, *Gaza und die philistäische Küste*, 1852, pp. 600 ff.). After the mention of Uranus, Ἰλαθι is quite in order. It is not the deified hero, as Mr. Charles thinks, but the god who is addressed in a manner of which many examples can be quoted. Uranus was probably identified in Beersheba with Baal Shamem (בעלשם) and he with Dhu'l Sharra — Dusares. The term ἀρηίφιλος is no doubt, as Professor Fowler points out in a letter, the common Homeric epithet of warriors "dear to Ares"; but it may have been chosen in this connection because the planet Mars was the special astral manifestation of Dusares. On this, however, no stress should be laid. Antipater's masterpiece may have represented Uranus-Dusares, the heaven-god, driving a chariot of war and leading the warlike hosts. The name of the artist whose fame the poet desired to immortalize was sufficiently common in all parts of the Hellenistic world, and the grandfather, as well as father, of Herod had borne it in Idumaea. There does not seem to be anything in the inscription clearly indicating the nationality of the poet. It appears to me certain that there is one grammatical error (ἔχων for ἔχοντα). But it is not necessary to resort to the assumption that the poet's vernacular was the Aramaic, in which the participle would be the same whether Antipater or Uranus were in the writer's mind. Even a Greek may have sacrificed grammar to metre or to the dominating thought of the divine being which wrung from him the Ἰλαθι.

As to the date, we should have a clew if we could be certain that the poet was familiar with Nonnus. According to Suidas (*s.v.*), Nonnus wrote his *Dionysiaca* ca. 410 A.D., and Proclus, who was born in 412 A.D., quotes his work. It is not unnatural to suppose that copies of the great epic spread to Ashkelon, Gaza, and the Greek cities of the Negeb. If a pagan author, living in Panopolis, Egypt, could write such a poem in the fifth century, there is no reason why a modest cultivator of the muses in Beersheba, still adhering to his ancestral worship, should not have borrowed from it a fine phrase. The peculiar

expression *ἄσπετος αἰών* also looks as if it were borrowed, but I have not found it in perusing the epic of Nonnus. The writer seems to be surprised that such a unique object of art should have been produced in Beersheba (*ἐνθάδε*). This surprise may have been feigned, a literary conceit, if he was a native of the place, or genuine, if he came as a visitor to the city. In either case, he may have been acquainted with the wonderful works in the Agora at Gaza. Unfortunately, we do not know how long they had been there when Chorikios wrote his description in the reign of Justinian. The Antipater inscription may be dated tentatively in the middle of the fifth century A.D. Even if there is no dependence upon Nonnus, it is not likely to be much earlier than the other inscriptions discovered by us in the Negeb.

Professor Fowler suggests the following translation :

"Eyes, what is the wonder which was here made as an ornament? What mortal invented the beauty which endless ages (had) not previously (invented)? Antipater made this and holding in his hands the reins of the armies dear to Ares he pointed (oh, be gracious!) to heaven."

He adds, "I confess that this seems to make Antipater out to be at once a general and an artist, which is not a usual combination, and I do not like the rendering of the line *καὶ οὐρανὸν ἴλαθι δέιξεν*, but at any rate this does no serious violence to grammar;" and subsequently, "On the whole I think the interrogation mark after *θαῦμα* is probably right." This involves rendering *πότ'* also as interrogative, not indefinite.

My colleague, Professor J. R. S. Sterrett, offers a somewhat similar rendering, also based on the assumption that "there is no grammatical break in the inscription":

"Eyes, what marvel can it be that ye see here? The universe hath been depicted. What mortal was it who fixed that order which since time began hath not been fixed before? Antipater, who holdeth in his hands the marshalling of warrior hosts — Antipater it was who fashioned it and portrayed in a group the vault of heaven."

He further observes: "Like many works of poetasters of a late day, the lines contain an odd mixture of that which has long been obsolete (*ἴλαθι*) with what is of recent origin (*ἡνῶρα* and *ἔτυξε*); and "*ἴλαθι* is a locative from *ἴλη*."

If such a locative from ἱλῆ actually was used in Greek speech, though I am not aware of its occurrence in extant Greek literature, it would admirably suit my conception of the poem. In my judgment, Antipater, the artist, had set forth, "in a group," Uranus, the heaven-god, holding the reins of a span of horses with the figures of soldiers by the side of them. This is perfectly intelligible, especially in the light of Chorikios' account of the masterpieces in Gaza. But I feel it to be safer to adhere to the reading ἱλαθι and the meaning "be gracious," which suits my interpretation just as well. I find it difficult to visualize a picture of the universe, or set before my mind's eye "the vault of heaven in a group"; and I frankly confess that I cannot quite understand this Antipater who is able to "portray the vault of heaven in a group" or "depict the universe," when he is commander of some troops in Beersheba, or find leisure for creations of this sort, though in charge of an army "dear to Ares."

One thing seems to me certain: Antipater is the artist whose work is celebrated, and not a general whose artistic performances entitle him to more honor than his victories on the battle-field, or a governor whose sycophantic rhymester immortalizes the wealth that paid for the masterpiece rather than the brain that conceived and the hand that executed it. If the grammatical accuracy must needs be saved, it may perhaps be permissible to put the reins in the hand of the artist. He created this ornament, this representation of the cosmic ruler and his army, made this thing of unprecedented beauty, portrayed the heaven-god, Uranus, directed with his genius the host of heaven as a charioteer his span, assigning to each figure its proper place, driving some forward, holding others back. This might be an allusion to the features of the work itself and, at the same time, be thought a graceful, though somewhat far-fetched, compliment to Antipater. But the man who could write $\delta \mu\eta \pi\acute{\alpha}\rho\omicron\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\sigma\pi\epsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma \alpha\iota\acute{\omega}\nu$ would, in my judgment, be capable, without a drop of Semitic blood in his veins, of writing also $\epsilon\chi\omega\nu$ for $\epsilon\chi\omicron\nu\tau\alpha$, if the metre demanded it.]

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